

**Town Meeting Coordinating Committee Meeting
Minutes from August 13, 2009**

- 1. Call to Order:** The meeting began at 4:40 pm. Present were Peggy Roberts, Mary Streeter, Rob Crowner, Carol Gray, Harry Brooks, Nonny Burack, and Dorwenda Bynum-Lewis. Town Moderator Harrison Gregg attended for the first half of the meeting.
- 2. Minutes of June 30, 2009:** Carol read the minutes from the prior meeting. Harry moved and Peggy seconded the minutes of June 30, 2009. After an edit, the vote was 4-0-3 with Carol, Harry and Rob abstaining. Carol will email the minutes to Peggy for distribution to the group.
- 3. Discussion with the Moderator:** The following issues were raised:
 - a. Harrison suggested the possible elimination of the provision of the Town Rules regarding the Consent Calendar since someone always questions articles in the Consent Calendar, which seems to make the provision meaningless.
 - b. He raised a query about the use of red and green cards, should the debate be 50/50 even if 80% of the people seem to be of one viewpoint. Mary thought it was a good to have a question and answer period about the budget when the question couldn't be called. Having that kind of informational exchange helps to make good decisions. Harrison said he tries to make a point that all points of view get stated though the idea of alternating point for point can sometimes make for a disjointed debate. He prefers sometimes to call on someone who might have a direct response to the previous speaker. Mary suggested a possible rule of thumb of alternating red and green for the first three to five speakers. Harrison said he usually calls on someone who is opposed and has come to him beforehand to say they would like to speak. Carol said the announcement that Harrison made at the most recent Special Town Meeting reminding people about using the red and green cards was helpful. Dorwenda said she had several young people come up to speak to her after watching Town Meeting on TV who said it looked like the same people were being called on repeatedly and was this a way to end debate quickly by calling on people known to call the question. Harrison noted that he gets complaints from people from all sides (e.g., about calling on members of the Select Board or other boards or individuals too often.) Peggy said that's a tricky question if you're repeatedly calling on someone from a board who might be the most knowledgeable. Harrison said usually people want to know from a member of the Finance Committee or Select Board about why they're proposing what they're proposing. Mary suggested having a different color card for calling the question; there were times with the CPA discussion when she had the specific answer to the question being asked but couldn't get recognized. Nonny said she thought having a white piece of paper for a question or answer might be a good idea. Harrison said usually people raise their hands without a card when they are offering information. He added it's important that people in the minority get a chance to express their opinion, but it's also important that things not be held up too long. Harrison expressed a concern about making amendments as a way of expressing a point. He said he was considering proposing a rule change to limit amendments presented to 3 minutes rather than 5 minutes, having the five minute rule apply only to the main motion presenter. Carol expressed concern that this change would disproportionately favor the Finance Committee or the Planning Board since they are often making the main motion.

- c. Harry asked how Harrison felt about electronic voting. Harrison said if you had electronic voting, you would likely use it for everything. He suggested Harry check with Aaron Hayden since some colleges are using it now. There was discussion about how the signals would be picked up. Harrison said he thought it would still be wise to use electronic voting sparingly (e.g., use a voice vote first). The effect of the electronic vote would be the same as a tally vote.
- d. Mary asked about points of order and points of information. She said she had not heard of a 'point of information'. Harrison said there was no such thing and he will give an instruction about points of order.
- e. The lighting in the auditorium was discussed. Peggy said some people wondered if the lighting makes it difficult to see Town Meeting members. Mary asked if there was any area that was harder for Harrison to see. He said maybe the far left corner was a little harder to see. Mary said she was told the only place where the lighting could be dimmed to reduce glare is over the Select Board. Harrison recommended that reducing the lighting in the front be pursued either with the Select Board or the Town Manager.
- f. Mary expressed concern about the tone some speakers. She suggested Harrison begin by reminding Town Meeting members that their tone and words must be civil at all times. Carol remarked that a couple of long-term town meeting members had commented on not wanting to not run again because of the meanness in Town Meeting. Harrison thought the problem was worse about three years ago.
- g. There was discussion about when amendments could be made. Mary asked if requiring people to make amendments by a certain time in the debate was a new policy, noting that it had seemed to cause a flurry of different amendments on the same article. She added that sometimes an amendment can resolve a problem that becomes apparent during the debate. Harrison said he had used this same policy last year. He said he would think more about the point.
- h. Peggy brought up the issue of the timing of the election and the beginning of terms of TMCC members. Harrison said if someone on the TMCC does not continue as a Town Meeting member, then he assumed he should just appoint someone to fill the empty position until after Annual Town Meeting. Nonny pointed out that this year there was a vacancy for only 2-3 weeks. Peggy said the period between the Town Election and the opening of Annual Town Meeting was the busiest time for TMCC and a newly appointed member would have trouble carrying on for an experienced member in the completion of work. Harrison said to be correct, if the term expires, the moderator should appoint a replacement.

Harrison had to leave at 5:30 pm. There was additional discussion about when to plan regular meetings with the Moderator. The consensus was it would be helpful to have regular meetings with the Moderator after Fall and Spring Town Meetings, and as needed before these Town Meetings.

- 4. Meeting with the Finance Committee:** Peggy will email materials for members to review in preparation for discussing a meeting with the Finance Committee. She will contact the Finance Committee about meeting with TMCC in late August or the beginning of September to discuss the issue of the order of budget articles.
- 5. Election of Officers:** Postponed until the next meeting.
- 6. Planning Ahead for Work:** Postponed until the next meeting.

7. Suggestions for Additions to TMCC Page on Town Website: Postponed until the next meeting.

8. Next Meeting: Peggy asked people to email her scheduling conflicts they had to aid in the development of a schedule for future meetings. The next meeting was set for Thursday, August 20, 2009 at 7pm.

9. Adjournment: It was moved and seconded to adjourn at 6:10 pm.

Documents Distributed at the meeting:

1. Agenda for today's meeting.

Carol Gray, Secretary